

## [GAMESNETWORK] DiGRA and "Gamergate"

34 messages

Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 2:27 AM

The executive board of the Digital Games Research Association publicly condemns the harassment and bullying that some of its members have faced over the last few months due to their work researching and studying videogames. DiGRA is categorically opposed to this kind of behavior.

### About DiGRA

DiGRA is an association for academics and professionals who research digital games and associated phenomena. It encourages high-quality research on games, and promotes collaboration and dissemination of work by its members.

DiGRA was established as an independent, volunteer organization and is financed by membership dues. We are self-governing and remain responsive to our members, who have always had the freedom to choose how we are run and what research should be encouraged and developed at our conferences.

As a scholarly organization, we encourage and promote constructive discussion about how games work, what they mean, and how they impact society and culture.

If you have questions or inquiries about DiGRA please contact us at [REDACTED]

– Gamesnetwork, discussion list of Digital Games Research Association, [www.digra.org](http://www.digra.org) Note: to unsubscribe, send "UNSUBSCRIBE GAMESNETWORK" to [REDACTED] from your subscribed email account. Web interface to subscribe and manage your subscription: <https://listserv.uta.fi/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=GAMESNETWORK&A=1> . The list archive is available online at: <https://listserv.uta.fi/archives/gamesnetwork.html>

Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 3:00 AM

Is there any additional response to GamerGate planned by DiGRA other than these two sentences? I am specifically curious if there will be a formal response to accusations floating around that DiGRA is the cause of GamerGate, or if that's just being ignored. It seems like DiGRA is at a crossroads in regards to how the gamer public perceives it moving forward (which might influence the ease with which DiGRA members can gain access to gamer communities, or even games companies), so I would personally hope for a somewhat more substantial response. "We're against bullying," while certainly true, also doesn't demonstrate much awareness of what's going on in the gamer community.

I think there is also an opportunity here to try to actively participate in this broader discussion about gamer culture, which is obviously very important to an awful lot of people. I don't know if that's a common feeling among researchers though, or if ivory tower "wait and see" attitudes will end up ruling

the day here.

Relatedly: Anyone here studying GamerGate in real time (e.g. blogging)? I'd like to follow how scholars of gamer culture place this in the broader evolution of the "gamer" identity, but most current events sources (at least aside from the recent Forbes article and a few other mainstream outlets) make this whole thing rather difficult to follow without tracking down specific threads on Reddit, Tumblr, 4chan, etc.

Assistant Professor, Industrial/Organizational Psychology

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**Sent:** Tuesday, November 4, 2014 7:28 PM

**Subject:** [GAMESNETWORK] DiGRA and "Gamergate"

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Spam

Not spam

Forget previous vote

– Gamesnetwork, discussion list of Digital Games Research Association, [www.digra.org](http://www.digra.org) Note: to unsubscribe, send "UNSUBSCRIBE GAMESNETWORK" to [REDACTED] from your subscribed email account. Web interface to subscribe and manage your subscription: <https://listserv.uta.fi/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=GAMESNETWORK&A=1> . The list archive is available online at: <https://listserv.uta.fi/archives/gamesnetwork.html>

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 3:17 AM

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I've been archiving websites, Twitter feeds of major players, and creative expression by the movement, but am not conducting studies per se. My goal was to archive the movement as it occurred rather than try to piece it together at the end.

Luckily I was able to convince prominent members that I was not a threat by agreeing NOT to critique and instead function as a neutral archivist/observer. As such, I've been able to tag different members with keeping me apprised of micro events as they occur.

So if anyone needs sources or data, I'm happy to help get you started.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

New York University

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 3:48 AM

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I am actually planning a dissertation surrounding these events, so if anyone wants to have a conversation about it, I would love to talk about it.

[REDACTED]

DePaul University

[REDACTED]

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 4:12 AM

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

It's good to see this brief official statement by DiGRA, but it does come off like the boilerplate that a company is "an equal-opportunity employer." And it seems on many fronts like gamegate is finally dying down, so coming out with this now seems a bit late to be taking a stand, and a bit more like "I guess we should say something."

At the same time, I would caution against a more robust or detailed response to or even notice of gamergate. It's been a surreal and sometimes quixotic ride with those who really do appear to be concerned with "ethics in games journalism" appearing completely tone-deaf to how this picayune issue plays against that of people in games dealing with death threats for daring to speak their mind. And then of course there are the trolls – fewer in number but organized in their noxious ranks and willing, IMO, to turn their impotent rage at their perception that "their hobby" is changing into harassment, doxxing, and threats.

All of which has made for a confusing, toxic tempest that does seem to be dying down – or that has at least had its few news cycles in the mainstream media and is being left to burble on its own of in various corners of the Internet.

Given all of that, I don't see anything to be gained by diving more substantively into this issue now. Certainly doing so won't raise DiGRA's esteem with any actual game companies, and probably not any large gamer communities. Making more statements about this now only risks giving the energy creatures more of what they crave most and will do anything to get: attention.

[REDACTED]

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 8:39 AM

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

While I understand concerns about "feeding the trolls," I also think it's worth recognizing that the harassment of women and other marginalized groups that dare to make, critique, research, or otherwise engage with games is a long-standing issue and not something that started (or is likely to end) with GamerGate. Until we've actually dealt with the underlying inequalities and the toxic culture that gave rise to GamerGate in the first place, I don't think it will ever be too late to take a stand. Personally I would like to see a more substantive statement that not only addresses GamerGate, but also acknowledges the many incidents that came before it. We're currently working on a statement like this for the Technoculture, Art, and Games Research Centre, and the ICA has recently published an article by Jennifer Stromer-Galley, Shira Chess, Mia Consalvo, Nina Huntemann, Adrienne Shaw, and Carol Stabile that contains a number of suggestions for academic organizations, institutions, and individuals to address toxic cultures and online harassment: [http://www.icahdq.org/membersnewsletter/NOV14\\_ART0009.asp](http://www.icahdq.org/membersnewsletter/NOV14_ART0009.asp)

Releasing a statement may not raise DiGRA's esteem with studio executives or gamer communities, but I happen to know a lot of independent developers, critics, and students that would be thrilled to see more organizations taking a stand on this issue (and implementing policies and other forms of support to back it up), myself included. I don't think GamerGate was primarily about getting attention, I think it was about silencing critical voices and pushing feminists and their "social justice agendas" out of games. While we may not be able to undo all the harm that's been done, I'd like the legacy of GamerGate to be a positive one, and that, to me, means refusing to stay silent.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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From: Games Research Network [mailto:GAMESNETWORK@atam] On Behalf Of [REDACTED]

\*Sent:\* Tuesday, November 4, 2014 7:28 PM

\*Subject:\* [GAMESNETWORK] DiGRA and "Gamergate"

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 8:58 AM

Reply to: Games Research Network [mailto:GAMESNETWORK@atam]  
[REDACTED]

Here's my own stories on GamerGate. I would note a couple of research-oriented things:

link to the timeline of gamergate is in this piece

<http://venturebeat.com/2014/10/17/deanbeat-with-gamergate-enough-is-enough/>

link to all-media sentiment analysis of gamergate is in this piece

<http://venturebeat.com/2014/10/31/the-deanbeat-like-it-or-hate-it-gamergate-isnt-losing-steam/>

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 9:14 AM

I completely agree that harassment in general is a serious issue. This is far, far worse for women than for men (if you haven't seen it, Jim and Emily Greer have some terrific data on this using themselves as a sort of A/B test), but it's a potential issue for anyone with any visibility in games. I've had to deal with stalking and death threats from players since the mid-90s, have had to involve the federal marshals at one point, and was most recently doxxed by a discontented player a little over a year ago. It is not fun, to put it mildly, and I know that I haven't had it as bad as some.

Nevertheless, I haven't seen any good come from giving any degree of attention (much less legitimacy) to those who engage in these behaviors. Brianna Wu posting a reward for the arrest or conviction of those who made threats against her is to be applauded though, as she's managed to talk *about* those who harassed her without having to talk *to* them or feed their desire for attention.

As for dealing with the toxic culture, IMO that comes under the "boil the ocean" kind of problem. The issues are so deeply embedded and so pervasive that I don't believe we're going to root out such harassment until we have evolved significantly as a species. As part of this, I believe most game execs simply see a low, pervasive level of trolling, hacking, harassment, etc., as the way things are, in the same way we've all come to more or less accept a certain amount of crime in a big city (though we've essentially been going through a particularly nasty "crime wave" recently). I'm not saying we should just shrug and move on, but neither should we be under any illusions of "solving" the problem of online harassment so long as people are able to create anonymous online identities.

All this is why I said the recent statement reads like boilerplate: it's only what any professional would expect, and doesn't commit DiGRA to anything other than standard professional conduct. It's better than continued silence, but also would have had more punch a couple of weeks ago.

Anyway, I too would be interested in seeing policies and support to back up such a statement, but in all honesty I have no idea what those would be -- do you have any examples?

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 9:16 AM

This is a woman's story on her experiences with a demon on a **book blogging site**. They are everywhere. Scary! [The Guardian](#).

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 3:13 PM

Hi everybody,

One of my hobbies over the past years has been reseaching and writing about game journalism, and as you know, "GamerGate is actually about ethics in games journalism" - so how could I not get involved? ;) I have quite a range of links, articles, analyses, tweets etc. in my private collection, and lots of scribblings of my own, waiting to get organised and formed into a publishable piece. I'd love to get together and share thoughts with other researchers interested in the whole shebang. Mailing list, anyone?

Greetings,

[Quoted text hidden]

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 3:41 PM

Hi [redacted] and everyone,

Due to an email address change I have been a bit out of the loop, so forgive me if I'm repeating old questions.

Has anyone set up/proposed a panel on GG for DiGRA 2015? I know of a few people out there who have collected bits of data. Aside from a mailing list/special interest group- which I am all for and think is a great idea [redacted] it might be worth us meeting up in person/having some talks in Leuphana as well.

Best,

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**Sent:** 05 November 2014 13:13

**Subject:** Re: [GAMESNETWORK] DiGRA and "Gamergate"

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 3:58 PM

I'm happy to be part of such a panel although I'm a bit biased in several ways :)

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**Ämne:** Re: [GAMESNETWORK] DiGRA and "Gamergate"

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 4:30 PM

Just wanted to flag [REDACTED] article about #GooferGoat on *First Person Scholar*. Easily the most thorough and insightful piece I've read on the subject, and a great example of how "middle-state" academic publishing can respond in real time to current events without sacrificing rigour: <http://www.firstpersonscholar.com/we-will-force-gaming-to-be-free/>

Best,

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Date: Wed, 5 Nov 2014 13:58:02 +0000

Subject: [GAMESNETWORK] SV: [GAMESNETWORK] DiGRA and "Gamergate"

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 4:51 PM

Hi all,

I've written a couple of pieces about gg for a fanzine. They are fairly basic; the group wanted a 'what is gg for outsiders', and thus they are not written in a very scholarly tone for this reason (also a couple of typos - sorry). The issue is here:

<http://journeyplanet.weebly.com/uploads/1/5/7/1/15715530/gamergatedrinktank.pdf>

8chan have reviewed my work, so we don't have to, thankfully:

It's so ridiculous its f\*\*\*\*g painful to read, but it's just another typical round of bullshit attack articles clumsily disguised as research with f\*\*\*\*d up or zero sources.'

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 4:52 PM

Ahh, you may also notice that I censored 8chan there and am thus refusing to allow their voices to be heard. Sorry about that.

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 7:31 PM

Safe(r) space policies are a good start, and something that I've seen have a positive effect here in Montreal. Even if your organization already has a policy for all of its events, you can always reach out to other organizations that you work with and encourage them to adopt one as well. I would also like to see support networks set up for people who have been harassed, perhaps in the form of an online platform that allows people to share their experiences anonymously and provide each other with advice or tips for dealing with doxxing, hacking, death threats, and other repercussions. Something along the lines of Fat, Ugly, or Slutty but with more of a focus on resource-sharing. This is something I'd like to work on as a long-term project, if it doesn't already exist. Since you've had personal experience with this, maybe you have some thoughts on whether or not this would be a useful resource?

Finding ways of showcasing or promoting feminist work is also helpful, as are public conversations on topics related to questions of diversity and inclusivity. The fishbowl at the previous DiGRA conference was wonderful (both in terms of its topic and its structure), and something I'd like to see continued in the future. The very fact that it generated the kind of backlash that it did is, I believe, a sign that these sort of initiatives are helping. I think it would be deliciously ironic if GamerGate actually helped to increase the visibility of feminist theory and practice, as opposed to diminishing it.

Another possibility is using research funds to support community initiatives like Girls Who Code, Pixelles, and Dames Making Games. This is already happening in a number of places and again, I've seen it have a significant

impact on local communities (including within the university). Obviously this is less of a suggestion for DiGRA, which is already operating on a shoe-string budget, than it is for research labs or projects with larger budgets. It doesn't take much money to keep these things going, but the value they provide is substantial.

Honestly I'm not too worried what game execs think about online harassment, because I tend to think that change, if it happens, will come from the bottom-up, from communities of players and makers, not the other way around. That certainly seems to have been the case thus far. Of course we can always try and apply pressure to the upper echelons of the game industry, but unless we have a large contingent of players behind us we're unlikely to outweigh the demands of their company's shareholders.

It's true that GamerGate is a symptom of much larger, systemic and societal issues, but I do think that there are ways of slowly chipping away at the underlying problems, even it's not going to change everything overnight.

And yeah I completely agree that the statement as it stands is very boilerplate-y. Hopefully these suggestions are helpful. Even if these are not all things that DiGRA can do on its own, releasing statements or articles like the one I linked to previously will hopefully encourage others to act.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I completely agree that harassment in general is a serious issue. This is far, far worse for women than for men (if you haven't seen it, Jim and Emily Greer have some terrific data on this using themselves as a sort of A/B test), but it's a potential issue for anyone with any visibility in games. I've had to deal with stalking and death threats from players since the mid-90s, have had to involve the federal marshals at one point, and was most recently doxxed by a discontented player a little over a year ago. It is not fun, to put it mildly, and I know that I haven't had it as bad as some.

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 8:24 PM

My organization (Stanford University Libraries) has had a statement about the general issue here for over a here, focused on conference attendance. You can read it here:

<https://library.stanford.edu/news/2013/07/sul-supports-conference-anti-harassment-policies>

While there is only so much we can do, when we are given conference travel funds, we are encouraged to inquire about the conference policies and at least encourage compliance with these principles.

I hope this helps in this discussion.

Henry

[Quoted text hidden]

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Curator for History of Science & Technology Collections;

[Quoted text hidden]

Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 8:27 PM

Sorry, meant to type "over a year" not "over a here" in that first sentence. Henry

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 8:29 PM

Just to add to some further suggestions to what [REDACTED] asked for: Some general proposals have been made by [REDACTED] (I am sure many other people have made suggestions, but at least they're a start). Perhaps the hyperlinked articles are more applicable to individual actions than they are to Digra as an organization, but I think they have merit in how to diminish oppressive structures or systems.

And thank you for that write-up, Carolyn. It's much appreciated.

[Quoted text hidden]

Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 8:35 PM

I'm mostly a lurker on this listhost (apologies! You're all great people, I just have more to learn before feeling like I can contribute) but I've been wondering for awhile when/where/if DiGRA would put out a statement on Gamer Gate. My two cents mostly consider the question of what it means for a movement like Gamer Gate to be taken seriously within academic publications. This is a difficult line to toe, because research on the movement will ultimately span beyond Game Studies, and move through sociology, anthropology and history. However, we ought to remember that working and publishing on Gamer Gate yields some sense of legitimacy to the movement, if only as something worth studying.

This is obviously a truism, but it ought to influence the considerations of those composing a panel, or working on writing about the movement and whether such writing can ever effectively exist within an apolitical spectrum. While academia always seems a little slow to the punch (I'm currently publishing a paper on Twitch Plays Pokemon, and I've only seen one other article on it ahead of me thus far), in this particular case Gamer Gate will exist for some time if only as a mentality by which "radical" perspectives mask themselves with legitimate issues. The Ethics in Games Journalism, I think, if anyone follows the timeline of development, or their lack of interest in ethics beyond Games Journalism, or their specific targets, seems shallow, to put mildly.

Thus, if people are beginning to make waves, either through commentary on Gamer Gate, or serious panels or publications, I would seriously endeavor that such ideas very very carefully assess the connection between politically live issues and academic attempts to maintain a position above such positions. As people have commented, Gamer Gate is now a live place within the discussion of power structures, ideologies, and maybe the larger role of the Cultural Turn within the 21st century. There is a place for apolitical observation, and analysis, but I don't know if Gamer Gate will ever be one of those places.

(Additionally, if there are people looking for help on archiving data/presenting/editing work on the movement, I would love to be a part of it.)

Best,

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 8:30 PM

Hello everyone,

I think Carolyn is making some good points. Plenty of research groups engage in multiple forms of public advocacy related to issues members deem important. While panels are a great idea, DiGRA 2015 is quite a ways off and may not be accessible to members who want to contribute to the discussion. Given recent events and subsequent media coverage, it would be nice for the organization as a whole to consider developing a mandate for the role it could play when occurrences such as these arise.

All the best,  
David

[Quoted text hidden]

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 8:40 PM

I am currently writing the conclusions to my Phd dissertation and I look at Gamergate there. Nothing being published on this on my side, but I would love to hear more voices on GG, and particularly from this list. I am actually a bit surprised there hasn't been a proper discussion on GG here (is this not the right place?).

One question that has been in my mind recently, and which might keep the ball rolling in this thread: if gamers are allegedly 'dying', or are now becoming a thing of the past (as many commentators on GG have been saying) what are they going to be replaced with? I mean, other than a broader category of consumers of video game products. Or what are gamers becoming? If GG is the over-reaction of a group of people who feels to be under threat and close to 'extinction', what will they become and who is going to 'outlive' them?

The narrative of 'new' replacing the old is quite pervasive in many of the articles about GG (see Dan Golding's post 'The End of Gamer' <http://dangolding.tumblr.com/> and Leigh Alexander on Gamasutra [http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/224400/Gamers\\_dont\\_have\\_to\\_be\\_your\\_audience\\_Gamers\\_are\\_over.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/224400/Gamers_dont_have_to_be_your_audience_Gamers_are_over.php)). But what does it actually mean? doesn't this polarise the debate too much?

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 9:23 PM

Having followed this debate and others related to trash-talking and gender, I think it is important to call into question the assumption that gender harassment is confined to anonymous gamers who feel free to shout their hatred whenever given a chance. This also occurs in everyday life as most of us know. The restrictions on such behavior have to do with social class position, occupational settings and neighborhood standards - most overt harassment occurs from those who feel they can get by with it but not have to pay a personal price for their comments. It also happens behind close doors. Gamergate just exposes what in fact is a constant fact in the experience of women.

When looking at the work of Feminist Frequency, for example, what is interesting are the comments posted and the YouTube clips which attempt to disprove her thesis. Yes, these are defensive reactions. But, they are also revealing of exactly the truth she uncovers about many male gamers. But, as I said the problem goes beyond gamers. This is a systemic problem throughout the media industry and in fact throughout all of the STEM fields. Interesting that when Jean Kilbourne did her series on Media and Gender bias the same vitrol did not seem to emerge. So the rise of social media has helped amplify the voices of already disturbed individuals in ways that were impossible 20 years ago.

I have always maintained that increased social, political and economic inequality accelerates backlashes from those who while feeling entitled see their power slipping away. And this occurs with both racial taunts, gender insults, and a whole range of unsavory behavior. My experience researching MMORPGS and FPS games are that people are NOT different on-line and off line. Behavior is consistent and people prize stability of identity above all else (accept perhaps for a few brave artists out there). It is just a shame that the game industry's lack of creative thinking helps maintain this by using the same tired tropes and narratives to appeal to product markets.

—Original Message—

Sent: Wednesday, November 05, 2014 12:41 PM

Subject: Re: [GAMESNETWORK] DiGRA and "Gamergate"

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 9:36 PM

I think the idea of "gamers" dying was more rhetorical, in that the identity of gamer is dying. Games are becoming more and more mainstream, to the point where (arguably) saying you play video games is starting to be on the same level of you saying you watch movies. There are people who stylize themselves as "movie-goers," but ultimately it doesn't make sense as an identity for most people, because watching movies is so "normal." It makes as much sense as saying you're a sports fan or like to read. There's nothing to replace that, but rather more people are absorbing it into their identity, and it's becoming less stigmatized to say you engage in that activity. Now, whether that is/will actually happen/ing (and to what extent), and whether that actually means anything for gamers in the long run, is up for debate. Personally, I think it can only mean the further legitimization of gaming as a hobby and as a storytelling medium. It may be a bit of an overstatement to say that the identity is "dead," though. Others disagree, obviously.

I do think that saying we're (if I may consider myself a part of this group) against harassment is a bit boilerplate-y and abstract, and there are definitely ways we can operationalize what it is that DiGRA stands for, while also acknowledging where gamers have come from and where we would like to go. Perhaps, as others have suggested, if we focus on the underlying issues of GamerGate and not the issue of GamerGate itself, we can create a statement or policy that reflects the systemic issues at play here while avoiding "feeding the trolls" or causing undue drama.

Sorry if this comes across as a little scattered—I'm between assistantship duties at the moment and could only fire off a few sentences. I would love to help put something together for DiGRA 2015 if that's something that would interest people, but since it's in Germany (my home country!) and I'm here in Chicago at DePaul, I'm not sure if I

could afford to go. But if anyone wants a psychological perspective on this, I will do my best to add to that discussion!

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 9:48 PM

It's been interesting to see some discussion now, I think that it hasn't popped up earlier because:

1. Don't feed the trolls.
2. It's been happening elsewhere (blogs, FB, twitter)
3. Legitimate fear of getting harrassed/doxxed/etc.

Jose

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Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 10:10 PM

Are there scholars on this list who've been personally doxxed as a result of their work? I think that would serve as an interesting contribution to the eventual public discussion that'll be help on the topic.

In addition to Krystal's great summary about gamer identity dying as rhetorical, I'd also suggest that Gamer Gate brought, for the first time, to mainstream audiences the serious question of what a gamer identity even is. Certainly there has been much public hyperbole about the gamer in the basement of their parents' house, but it goes beyond the dichotomy of gamer as social or not. It also includes whether gamers are concerned about their characters being male, or white or straight. I think Gamer Gate has had some interesting backfire for its initial proponents in regards to making these characters about gaming identity much more central than the initial construction of the gamer as outcast.

Additionally, some great blogs have been focusing on the conception of the gamer outcast as controlling the discourse around gamer identity as its own power relation. The idea being that a gamer is someone who cannot be a football player, or otherwise popular and as such is relegated to [their own politics of oppression](#). I found this quote most relevant to the idea: "co-opting the language and posture of grievance is how members of a privileged class express their belief that the way they live shouldn't have to change, that their opponents are hypocrites and perhaps even the real oppressors." I don't think the identity, when meaning someone who plays games, will die any sooner than games themselves. However, it will inevitably be changed.

Finally I think a point no one has really touched (even in the blogosphere) is that "Gamer" identity is also immensely tied in with what games one plays. I think Halo Live is now infamous for what people say and do while playing any part of the series. What is probably less well known is the immense respect most RTS players have for the community and games in which they find themselves. In many amateur and professional leagues, concepts like "badmanner" are a mark of a bad player, and can even lead to game losses within all forms of tournaments. The same could be said about mobile gamers versus console gamers, or people who play on the internet compared to those who only play with friends. I think in this sense Gamer Gate is correct when they say that many of the gamers who are most vocal and abusive are only a subset of "gamers" as a concept.

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Thu, Nov 6, 2014 at 12:39 AM

For now I don't think we will issue additional responses (unless they're needed and/or requested by our membership).

However, I'm speaking for myself here rather than for the whole board.

Jose

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Thu, Nov 6, 2014 at 12:41 AM

I too was curious when this discussion would pop up here. For what it's worth, here's what [REDACTED] written on the subject:

"[Gaming's Summer of Rage](#)" (Boston Globe)

"[Gamergate's Silver Lining](#)" – not to whitewash the terrible harassment etc., but the fact of the matter is that games *are* getting more interesting and sophisticated and game developers *are* getting more diverse, and no amount of hysterical cultural panic on the part of a relatively small subset of gamers is going to change that (NY Mag)

"[Gamergate Should Stop Lying to Journalists — and Itself](#)" -- this is about discomfort with progressivism and feminism in gaming, not "ethics in gaming journalism" (NY Mag)

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Thu, Nov 6, 2014 at 12:45 AM

Wrong link for "Gamergate's Silver Lining" -- [this one's](#) correct.

I also, having been briefly fixated on this subject and having attempted to interact with many GamerGaters online, can't emphasize enough how pointless it is to engage with most of them. The most vocal contingent of Ggers come from a discourse-culture (4chan etc.) that simply doesn't abide by the standard rules of language and tone and respect most of us are used to. I can tell you firsthand how easy it is to get sucked into the idea that there is something substantive to "debate" here. But no: It is hatred at "social justice warriors" all the way down; this is a deeply conservative movement, even if its member claim to be liberal (perhaps many of them *are* pro- gay marriage and pot, for all I know – that doesn't mean they don't also hate feminism).

From what I've seen, there is nearly 100% overlap between the people concerned about "journalistic ethics" (but only as it pertains to a tiny, mostly unprofitable corner of the industry, of course) and those who who were *enraged* at Anita Sarkeesian's videos.

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Thu, Nov 6, 2014 at 5:38 AM

On Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 12:31 PM [REDACTED] wrote:

Safe(r) space policies are a good start, and something that I've seen have a positive effect here in Montreal. Even if your organization already has a policy for all of its events, you can always reach out to other organizations that you work with and encourage them to adopt one as well. I would also like to see support networks set up for people who have been harassed, perhaps in the form of an online platform that allows

people to share their experiences anonymously and provide each other with advice or tips for dealing with doxxing, hacking, death threats, and other repercussions. Something along the lines of Fat, Ugly, or Slutty but with more of a focus on resource-sharing. This is something I'd like to work on as a long-term project, if it doesn't already exist. Since you've had personal experience with this, maybe you have some thoughts on whether or not this would be a useful resource?

In general, the response plans we've had at various companies over the years were in three levels: 3 - ignore it. 2 - call the cops. 1 - clear the building. The last is mercifully rare, though SWATing may well become the new bomb threat. That said, I honestly haven't found anything that really works and is itself sufficiently impervious to trolls - nothing worse than a harassing troll getting into your anonymous online space where people are looking for support, for example. It is, as near as I can tell, an unfortunate but ubiquitous side-effect of technology that allows for online anonymity invites harassment without effective recourse.

Finding ways of showcasing or promoting feminist work is also helpful, as are public conversations on topics related to questions of diversity and inclusivity. The fishbowl at the previous DiGRA conference was wonderful (both in terms of its topic and its structure), and something I'd like to see continued in the future. The very fact that it generated the kind of backlash that it did is, I believe, a sign that these sort of initiatives are helping. I think it would be deliciously ironic if GamerGate actually helped to increase the visibility of feminist theory and practice, as opposed to diminishing it.

I think in many ways that's already happening. I'm not sure Anita would have gotten on Colbert otherwise. In general I think this episode is past its peak in the public consciousness, and what will remain will be largely favorable to anti-harassment (and as a subset, pro-feminist) causes. It will fester along in some of the darker corners online, I'm sure, but trying to eliminate that would only make things worse.

Another possibility is using research funds to support community initiatives like Girls Who Code, Pixelles, and Dames Making Games. This is already happening in a number of places and again, I've seen it have a significant impact on local communities (including within the university). Obviously this is less of a suggestion for DiGRA, which is already operating on a shoe-string budget, than it is for research labs or projects with larger budgets. It doesn't take much money to keep these things going, but the value they provide is substantial.

Agreed - I think a lot of places are already trying to invite diversity; in our program creating a culture of real diversity is one of our key points. Maybe gamergate will be the kick needed to have more institutions move more pro-actively in that direction.

Honestly I'm not too worried what game execs think about online harassment, because I tend to think that change, if it happens, will come from the bottom-up, from communities of players and makers, not the other way around. That certainly seems to have been the case thus far. Of course we can always try and apply pressure to the upper echelons of the game industry, but unless we have a large contingent of players behind us we're unlikely to outweigh the demands of their company's shareholders.

Game execs want to sell games. Some of them have a social conscience, others really don't. Frankly, neither gamergaters nor academics are going to have much effect in changing their opinions unless and until they can show a significant effect on game sales. Having seen many "we'll show you!" fist-shaking from angry fans who then stand in line to buy the next big game release, I suspect not many execs are really giving this a second thought.

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Thu, Nov 6, 2014 at 5:55 AM

On Wed, Nov 5, 2014 at 1:40 PM [REDACTED] wrote:

One question that has been in my mind recently, and which might keep the ball rolling in this thread: if gamers are allegedly 'dying', or are now becoming a thing of the past (as many commentators on GG have been saying) what are they going to be replaced with? I mean, other than a broader category of consumers of video game products.

See, that's just it: gamers aren't dying (despite Leigh's article), but the world has definitely changed around them.

A bit of perspective: For decades, people in game development talked kind of wistfully about the day when we'd be "mainstream." How wonderful that would be! In In 2004, just a few days before WoW launched – almost ten years ago now to the day! – I was told by some venture capitalists we were pitching to that they didn't believe that there were more than 500,000 MMO players \*on the planet\* and certainly far fewer than 1M gamers overall. We disagreed, but that was the reality they saw.

A few days later of course, Blizzard had over 250K subscribers their first weekend, topping a million within the first few months. We knew there had been millions of people playing games avidly in Asia, but this was one of the first big changes in the US. Then a few years later Happy Farm led to Farmtown which led to Farmville, which attracted over 50 million players. Suddenly we were mainstream.

Now we have hundreds of millions of people playing games, the industry is a many-billion-dollar industry (mobile games alone may hit close to \$20B this year), and games are part of popular culture.

All of which leaves those who see themselves as the "true" gamers wondering what happened to their nice cozy walled-off little hobby. They're all still there, but now they're diluted among many millions of others (cheering on professional League of Legends players in worldwide championships!). It's not surprising that some feel like their private party has been spoiled by popularity – not unlike how many felt in the early 2000s when people formerly confined to Prodigy and AOL started flooding the Web.

And it's repugnant but not surprising that of all those people, some few – a few thousand at most – have gone past angry forum posts to encouraging what is surely an even smaller number to hide behind anonymity and make threats and harass others. Their targets have been mostly women for many reasons, not the least of which is that "traditional gaming" has been synonymous with young white heterosexual unmarried males, many of whom live up to the stereotype in having uncertain at best interactions with women.

So, TL;DR: gamers aren't "dying" but they are being subsumed in a broader culture that now accepts rather than shuns games, and many are not happy about this.

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Thu, Nov 6, 2014 at 9:49 AM

Hi becca,

just thought I'd say hi somewhere else than in the trenches :)

/Staffan

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Skickat:** den 5 november 2014 02:17

[REDACTED]

**Ämne:** Re: [GAMESNETWORK] DiGRA and "Gamergate"

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Thu, Nov 6, 2014 at 11:38 AM

I'll weigh in a bit here with thoughts on the concept of gamer identity, since it's been percolating around in my head for a few weeks now. I didn't really keep up with everything when it was blowing up, I've only come in towards the end of it all. The tone of the debate from all sides was quite unfortunate.

I'm commenting as the discussion becomes more centered around the gamer identity construct and less around a reaction to the perpetration of harassment, bullying and criminal acts against people trying to do their jobs or live their lives, which it's good to see DiGRA speaking out against, however formulaic the speech is.

I want to discuss the conflation of gamer identity with a hobby or some other term that degrades its value to the individual who identifies as such. I think this is quite disrespectful and doesn't really do the 'gamers' I know justice. For most of the gamers I know, at least the ones who identified as such fifteen years ago or so, gaming is as much of a hobby as kink is to the kinky, or as much as being a 'hacker' is to that crowd. Each is better described as a lifestyle and I feel is best treated as such. There are certainly plenty of people who identify as gamers to whom it is simply a pastime, but there are many to whom it is not.

Fundamentally there's a question here about choice and identity. Identity can come from a lack or perceived lack of choice- notably cultures of the disabled or the oppressed. Equally, identity can come from a deliberate and conscious choice- commitment to a position of responsibility such as parenthood or military service or to an ethical or moral framework such as veganism. Identity can also come from a mix of the two. I feel religious faith is the best example of this, where a person feels they do not have a choice in a certain thing (believing that God exists) but make a conscientious decision to act in a particular way given that lack of choice (submission to God's will). See: anyone who says 'I wish I could feel that X were not true, but I cannot, so I act in Y fashion'.

The 'gamers' I am familiar with display a similar pattern of belief to this last. There is an element of compulsion generated by the way they think about the world coupled with a conscious decision to embrace it and delight in it (or be delightfully cynical about it in some cases) by engaging in a particular subculture or set of subcultures. If you asked them 'could you stop playing videogames' they would say 'sure'. If you asked them 'could you stop being a gamer' they would say 'probably not'. It is very much an identity in the same way that their gender or orientation is.

So, to me, the assertion that the gamer identity might 'die' is a little far-fetched. That 'gamer' might cease to have the meaning it once did is more reasonable, but I personally feel a great degree of empathy for those who are frustrated that their 'tag' is being altered to mean something a lot less profound for the new gamers than it does for them. I see parallels between this and [BDSM practitioners reacting to 50Shades of Grey \(text very NSFW\)](#), for example, another case of people who've worked through their identity and come to terms with how to enjoy and delight in it in close-knit, isolated communities only to have the incidental tools and activities around which the lifestyle is structured become suddenly massively popular, while the actual struggles and triumphs of the pre-existing communities go largely unsounded (there was a great deal of this going on in the competitive Starcraft community shortly after the release of Starcraft II if anyone cares for somewhere to explore).

(If you do read the linked article I draw your attention to the unwillingness to promote the discussion of the particularities of BDSM because preventing domestic violence is far more important. I feel this might also parallel why many Gamers are quite hesitant to talk about what I'm talking about now, because they feel like their issues pale in comparison, and silence themselves whenever so much as looked at harshly. I happen to disagree with that posture since it's probably played a large part in getting us where we are now.)

How much does Gamersgate have to do with this? Abusers exist within the larger kink community despite the (quite extensive) lengths the community takes to protect against them because kink and abuse rest on different sides of a knife edge- play and reality exist very close together as those of you who've read up on pre-digital play scholarship know. In a similar way, I've found gamer communities do tend to provide a nurturing and educational space for people who otherwise might end up doing the sorts of things the Gamersgate trolls did, thanks to a mindset that sees the world and everything in it as something to be played with. They often provide a safe(r) space in which these people can harness the positive aspects of their psychology and learn to control the dangerous ones, often with very positive results. Not always, however, and Gamersgate is an example of what happens when communities fail their members, or people who would have benefited greatly from a supportive and experienced gamer community did not find one. I expect some of the hesitance in gamer communities to roundly condemn and vilify these people is a sense of 'there but for the grace of god go I' and feeling that they have failed in their duty to reach out and help fellow gamers in need, because clearly these people are in need of help.

So that's my two cents on the gamer identity. I'm not personally attached to using 'gamer' to describe this kind of person, but there are quite a few who are, and feel quite threatened when their choice of label is questioned, they are roundly abused and insulted for behavior that once upon a time they might have done, but their gamer identity has helped them go beyond. Given my experience of gamer identity is more about the tendency to engage in complex, structured and involved play than association with any particular given game or genre, it's hard to think what one might call it other than 'gamer'.

Cheers

Stefan

PS: I also want to acknowledge that gamer communities are great places for gamers, but can be at best confronting, at worst downright hostile. Abuse or prejudice of any kind needs to be addressed and confronted regardless of where it occurs and I'm quite active in doing so in several communities. I hope I don't come across as trying to downplay that in this, I'm just focusing elsewhere and trying to provide a different perspective.

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Thu, Nov 6, 2014 at 3:09 PM

Hello Staffan! Good to see a fellow Twitter soldier ;-)

Sent from my iPhone

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